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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6/Rev.1 (Vols. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 30. Technological innovations (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of comments by delegations, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 30 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 31. Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance (continued)

2. Ms. SHEAROUSE (United States of America) said that at a time when efforts were under way to reduce the size of the Organization's budget, alteration and maintenance projects should be deferred unless they were absolutely essential. Accordingly she asked the Secretary-General to identify those projects which could be deferred without danger of aggravating any deterioration in the buildings and installations of the United Nations or which were not necessary to comply with the building regulations, and to make that information available in informal consultations.

3. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Secretariat had a detailed list of projects to be implemented should the Secretary-General's requests be approved, and that it was for the Advisory Committee to indicate which projects could be deferred and which must be implemented. Expenditure under section 31 had been reduced in the preparation of the proposed programme budget and efforts had been made to limit requests for appropriations to urgent projects that could not be deferred.

4. Ms. SHEAROUSE (United States of America) said that the information she had requested was necessary for continued consideration of the section, given which it should be made available in informal consultations.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of further comments, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 31 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 32. Staff assessment (continued)

6. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of comments by delegations, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 32 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 33. International Seabed Authority (continued)

7. Mr. KOUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) said that all expenses, including administrative expenses, relating to the functioning of treaty bodies, such as the International Seabed Authority, should be met by the parties to the conventions in question. It was unacceptable for the budget to contain proposals for the funding of the administrative expenses of the Authority from the regular budget of the United Nations. He trusted that the parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would quickly assume responsibility for the expenses in question so that section 33 of the regular budget could be deleted.

8. Ms. HOLLAND (United Kingdom) said that the appropriation under section 33 of the proposed budget was the same as in the current biennium, pending submission by the International Seabed Authority of further details of its budget. Her delegation wished to know when further information on the Authority's budget for the biennium 1996-1997 would be available.

9. Mrs. SEALY MONTEITH (Jamaica) said that her delegation attached great importance to the establishment of the International Seabed Authority as well as to the provision of adequate support to enable the Authority to carry out its activities.

10. In section 33 of the proposed programme budget the Secretary-General recalled the decision of the General Assembly to fund the administrative expenses of the International Seabed Authority from the regular budget of the United Nations on the terms established in its resolution 48/263. In that regard her delegation took note of the appropriation under section 33 of the proposed budget, pending submission by the Authority of its budget, and also took note of the fact that the Advisory Committee had indicated its concurrence in the request for that appropriation.

11. She understood that the appropriation to fund the initial administrative expenses of the Authority for 1994-1995 had been based on requirements for a six-month period only. Accordingly, an appropriate adjustment would need to be made to cover requirements for a full year.

12. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) recalled that the International Seabed Authority had been unable to elect the members of its Council or the Secretary-General of the Authority at the two substantive meetings held in 1995, as a result of which that work would be continued at the next meetings, scheduled for March and August 1996. For that reason the Authority had requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to submit to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session a proposed budget covering the administrative expenses of the Authority for 1996, including the cost of convening and servicing meetings of the Authority as necessary.

13. In preparing the proposed budget for 1996, the Secretary-General should be guided by document A/C.5/49/25, which had been the basis for the current expenses authorized for the Authority under a new and separate section of the programme budget of the United Nations, taking into account the adjustments to be made as a result of the fact that the Secretary-General of the Authority

could not be elected, at the earliest, until the next meeting of its Assembly in March 1996.

14. In that regard the Authority had also submitted a request to the Secretary-General of the United Nations that the staff and facilities of the Kingston Office for the Law of the Sea should continue to function as the interim secretariat of the Authority after 1 October 1995, and had authorized the Secretary-General of the United Nations to administer the interim secretariat until the Secretary-General of the Authority took office.

15. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the question of the administrative expenses of the International Seabed Authority was dealt with in the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/263, by which it he had decided to meet the administrative expenses of the Authority until the end of the year following the year during which the Agreement entered into force. It was anticipated that the Agreement would not come into force for several years. Therefore, at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had submitted a statement of programme budget implications in respect of that resolution, after which the Assembly had approved an appropriation of $776,000 in its resolution 49/219.

16. When the Secretary-General had submitted the budget proposals for section 33, it had been expected that the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority would meet in August 1995 and appoint a Secretary-General who would be responsible for submitting a complete budget, estimates of expenditure under which would be included in the budget proposals. However, the Preparatory Commission had not been able to appoint a Secretary-General, for which reason it had requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue to administer the Authority and prepare the budget for 1996.

17. Given the above, in particular that the Authority remained without a Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the United Nations intended to submit estimates of expenditure for 1996 within the next few days, as all the language versions became available. It was anticipated that the current appropriation would be sufficient to meet expenses for the remaining two months of 1995, with the result that the operations of the secretariat of the International Seabed Authority would not be affected.

18. Mr. GODA (Japan) said that he would comment once he had received additional information on the proposed budget for the International Seabed Authority; consideration of the section should continue in informal consultations.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of further comments, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 33 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Income section 1. Income from staff assessment (continued)

20. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of comments by delegations, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of income section 1 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

Income section 2. General income (continued)

21. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of comments by delegations, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of income section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

Income section 3. Services to the public (continued)

22. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of comments by delegations, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of income section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus completed the first reading of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

24. Mr. AMARI (Tunisia) expressed his satisfaction at the spirit of understanding and cooperation that had reigned during the first reading of the proposed programme budget, and hoped that it would carry over to the informal consultations. He urged the Secretariat to furnish delegations with all the information requested so as to facilitate negotiations in informal consultations, and urged all delegations to cooperate in reaching a consensus on the proposed programme budget. That should be done as quickly as possible, since it constituted a measure of the credibility of the Fifth Committee and, ultimately, of the Organization.

25. The CHAIRMAN agreed with the Tunisian representative's observations, particularly regarding the importance of ensuring that the constructive spirit that had reigned during the Committee's plenary meetings continued in the informal consultations.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.